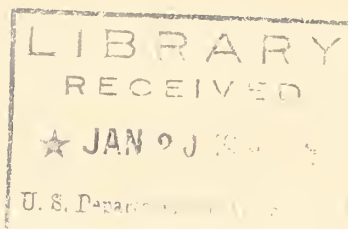


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FROM SOUP TO NUTS WITH YOUR FOOD INSPECTOR

A radio talk by Dr. L. D. Elliott, Bureau of Food, Drug and Insecticide Administration, delivered through Station WRC and 32 other stations associated with the National Broadcasting Company, January 9, 1930 at 1:30 p.m. Eastern Standard Time.

"Jack, I think you had better go right down and collect an official sample from that shipment of butter that just arrived in town. The Chief just got this wire from the Inspector James. He says he has found the manufacturer deliberately turning out butter low in butterfat and packing it short weight to boot. Tom, can you drive out and inspect the Bates Canning Company plant this morning? They begin packing tomatoes today, I hear, and you remember we seized some of their goods last year. Harry, we must be sure and sample that carload of mixed feed when it arrives. That's the man who has been shipping stock feeds below guarantee in protein." The voice is that of the chief inspector in one of the sixteen food and drug inspection field stations of the Federal food and drug administration. The group of inspectors with their work for the day lined up disperse to their various assignments. But one man remains standing aside somewhat shyly. "Green, since this is your first day with us, how would you like to go along with me while I drive out to a fruit cannery? On the way perhaps I can give you an insight into the interesting work in store for you as a food inspector."

It was an invitation which the new inspector was not slow to accept. A recent graduate in Chemistry from the university, he had taken the Government civil service examination and now, somewhat bewildered, found himself a duly appointed government food and drug inspector, sworn to help enforce the famous pure food law. So he was eager to learn more about the service which he knew in a vague sort of way operated under the Federal food and drugs act to safeguard the food supply of the American people.

"You know," said the chief inspector as they climbed into his car, "when I was a boy on a farm, little did my folks anticipate the need of food inspectors. We grew our own wheat, which, through the mysterious medium of the local grist mill, was metamorphosed into the flour which formed the basis of so many of our home-made culinary delights. The cream from our herd did not disappear beyond our ken into some modern creamery but, short circuited through the old barrel churn, appeared forthwith on our own table as butter. Cellar shelves sagged with a winter's supply of jellies and preserves fashioned from raw materials gathered a stone's throw from that ^{most} enticingly aromatic of all food factories, the farm kitchen. But customs change with progress. No longer does the housewife have a finger in every pie. Can opener is king in the kitchen today. Of necessity she has had to surrender personal supervision over her food supply to a very large degree. And right there is where the Government food inspector steps in to assume the burden of sponsoring, in so far as possible under the Federal food and drugs act, the safety of her family's food."

And so the chief inspector, veteran of many years' service, went on to explain the workings of the law; how it has jurisdiction only over shipments of food and drug products which have entered the channels of interstate commerce, those which are being imported into the country, or those manufactured and sold

within the Territories or the District of Columbia; how the penalty provisions of the act operate to prevent the distribution of foods containing added harmful ingredients, those containing filthy and rotten material, food and drug products sold under representations involving fraud or deceit upon the consumer. He described how under the law shipments within its jurisdiction found adulterated or misbranded might be removed from the channels of distribution by seizure and the shipper prosecuted. "You may wonder," he went on, "how the Food and Drug Administration with its relatively small force of a few hundred workers, including administrative officers, chemists, inspectors and other specialists, can adequately supervise the really enormous volume and variety of food and drug products which are shipped within the jurisdiction of the act. As a matter of fact, the worst forms of food adulteration have now become largely a topic of reminiscent discussion among members of the "I remember when" club. That today the majority of American food manufacturers are doing an honest and legitimate business goes without saying. Our attention can therefore be concentrated on that narrow fringe of the industry where deliberate or careless violation of the law are involved. Probably you are wondering why, if the food and drugs act assumes jurisdiction only after shipment from one State to another, we are now driving way out into the country to watch them can peaches. As a matter of fact, a good share of the time of the food inspector is taken up doing just that sort of thing. You remember I asked one of the boys to visit that tomato cannery. We had to seize and destroy a lot of catsup packed in that cannery last year because it contained rotten tomatoes. That doesn't happen very often nowadays, and we don't want it to happen in that cannery again. The first thing Tom will do when he gets there will be to take a look at the quality of tomatoes at the receiving platform. If they don't all pass muster under his experienced eye he will next scrutinize the work of the sorters and if he finds too many overripe specimens eventually escaping into the cookers he will go straight to the superintendent and warn him that such practices inevitably invite trouble under the food and drugs act. Nine manufacturers out of ten welcome and act on the constructive criticism by our men and modify their factory processes accordingly. The Food and Drug Administration specializes in the correction of violations before they occur. But the tenth man who flouts our warning subsequently discovers the teeth in the law.

"I wonder if you ever stopped to think what the butterfat content of butter is. As a matter of fact, Congress in 1923 defined butter for the purposes of food and drugs act as a product containing not less than 80% butterfat. Now if a butter shipment is low in fat it simply means the substitution of ordinary water for fat. Butterfat costs somewhere around forty cents a pound. Water costs nothing. That telegram I read this morning about the adulterated butter probably suggested to you the possibility of widespread violations. Don't forget that the work of the food inspector is concentrated on that small section of the food industry which for one reason or another gets tangled up in the meshes of the pure food law. Jack is probably weighing up cartons from that shipment of suspected butter by now. He has set up his accurate portable scales and will weigh up enough of the prints to determine whether or not the purchaser will get a pound when he pays for a pound. By the time we get back to the office this afternoon the chemists will know whether the fat content is up to 80% or not. Tomorrow will see the shipment seized if it proves to be either short weight or low in fat or both."

The chief inspector went on to describe how the Food and Drug Administration takes steps to assure itself that all flour entering interstate commerce is full weight and does not carry an excess of that very cheap ingredient, water; that

eggs, fit only for ammunition purposes, do not become mixed with eggs intended for more esthetic uses; that pancake sirup which contains glucose is not ashamed to say so; that flavoring extracts are exactly what they presume to be; that pectin jellies do not masquerade as standard fruit jellies; that our holiday supplies of almonds and walnuts are untouched by the greedy depredations of insect pests; that our feeding stuffs actually have the feeding value promised on the tag. Did you ever realize that the pure food law applies to animals' feeds as well as to food for man, or, in the flattering words of the act, food for "man or other animals?"

And so the application of the act to the whole array of foods was touched upon. Nor did the veteran fail to tell something of the drug enforcement problem of the Food, and Drug Administration, of its constant efforts to curb the traffic in quack remedies, but, as the chief inspector said, that is another story.

As they drew near to their destination, the new recruit, thrilled with the story unfolded, exclaimed, "And to think that I used to picture inspectors as crusty individuals with long noses prying into everybody's business." The chief inspector smiled at this. "You know," he said, "That reminds me of a dissertation I once read entitled 'On the Dignity, Gravity and Authority of Noses.' The dignity of the food inspection work I have tried to convey to you; our responsibility under the terms of the act reflects the gravity of the situation; and we ever strive toward our goal--to be able to say to the housewife with the voice of authority born of conviction of a job well done, 'We have fulfilled the trust you have placed in our hands. Your family's food is pure and it is honest.'"

